

Listen

A Seeker's Resource for Spiritual Direction

A P R I L 2 0 1 5

V O L 9 : I S S U E 2

TRUST LIFE, WAKE UP!

Awaken! The time is now for each of us to become fully alive to the remarkable experience of living, in spite of heartache and messiness, stagnation, and lack of vision or resources. We must each wake up into the possibility embedded in the present time, in order to live into the title of Seth Godin's book, *What To Do When It's Your Turn, And It's Always Your Turn*.

Waking up to reality requires a mindset to listen to yourself and others, to become practiced at discovering how our own life speaks in the stillness or quiet of our body, mind and heart. Connecting with a soul-companion one-on-one, participating in group spiritual direction, or simply having a trusted friend deliberately listen to us share our story offers a thankful gift. Trappist monk Thomas Merton wrote, "The whole purpose of spiritual direction is to penetrate beneath the surface of our lives, get behind the façade of conventional gestures and attitudes which we present to the world, and draw out our inner spiritual freedom."

Why is waking up and making time to listen essential? Without being present to the here and now, we might miss the opportunity to love and shift the world into a precious habitat of love. The ability to know oneself becomes apparent when we interact with each other, or can be revealed when a care



Lilac Breasted Roller — *Coracias caudatus*

or concern in the world commands our passion and compassion.

Recently, I desired to risk sharing part of my story with a man whom I trust and care deeply about. But an experience of raw vulnerability began when I recognized fear and timidity within myself. A litany of questions erupted in my mind—similar to what can pop up when we desire to share portions of our story in spiritual guidance—*What if I am rejected or misunderstood? What if I can't express myself and use one hundred words, when ten would suffice?* In this instance, irritated with myself, I questioned: *how come I get so muddled up inside? Where is the freedom to trust my own voice and heart, and the person whom I want to talk with?* I did muster the courage to speak—but not before I'd mumbled and side stepped until my friend, gently recognizing my discomfort, took my hands and

softly said, "there's nothing you can't tell me." In that moment, an essential recognition unlocked and softened in me. My voice and story began to flow. I understood Merton's words, "We do not find the meaning of life by ourselves alone—we find it with another," in a new way.

We must be brave to wake up, to listen, and to share our life reality with each other through words, service, advocacy, and presence. In *How To Train a Wild Elephant*, Jan Chozen Bays, MD, wrote, "May I respectfully remind you, life and death are of supreme importance. Time swiftly passes by and opportunity is lost. When this day has passed, our days of life will be decreased by one. Each of us should strive to awaken. Awaken! Take heed! Do not squander your life!"

—Pegge Erkeneff

SEEDS OF INTEREST:

• Field Guide: *How is receiving or offering spiritual guidance a gift in your life?*

• Book Review:
Poems for Meditation: An Invitation to Prayer

• Global Resources

• Ask Owl

BOOK REVIEW

Poems for Meditation: An Invitation to Prayer

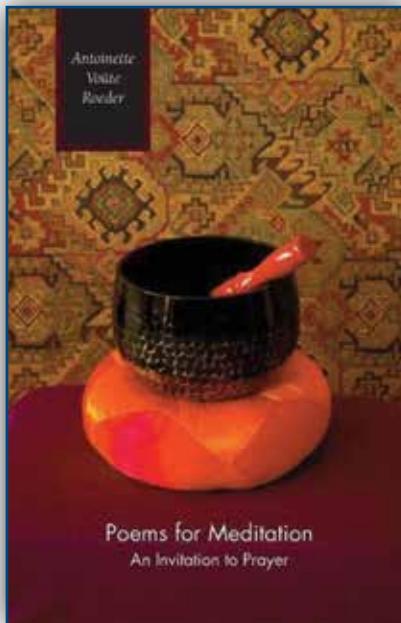
by Antoinette Voûte Roeder

Berkley, CA: Apocryphile Press, 2014

102 pages, CAD\$14.78, GBP£7.95, USD\$12.95

Spiritual guide Antoinette Voûte Roeder is a poet and author of four books of poetry. Born in The Netherlands, she lived in the United States as a child, and currently resides in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. In *Poems for Meditation: An Invitation to Prayer*, she offers simple and profound poems that will open the reader to stillness, appreciation, and a sacred pause. In a note to the reader, Roeder writes, "If you are a contemplative, you take time to look, to listen, and in those, to love. We do the same in contemplative prayer only inwardly. Each is part of one movement. What begins inwardly must *out*, what begins outwardly must *in*. What separates *in* and *out* is a semi-permeable membrane and is in the end perhaps merely illusion." (5)

The poems were inspired by her daily reading of *A Year with Rumi*, translated by Coleman Barks, during a nine-month time period. Divided into three sections: breath prayer, sound prayer, and prayer, each poem lingers in the mind and heart of the reader. "Listen to the wind / blowing between / the covers of / the world" (29). And from the section, "Prayer" Roeder writes, "Every morning / I meet my heart, / It is green / and darkly pulsing / It



tells me my story / It has no words / I listen." (69)

An added bonus are two appendices: "Facilitating Breath Awareness" and "About Contemplative Prayer" which are clearly composed from the lens of an experienced spiritual guide. For example, "Contemplative prayer is what I like to call "bare bones" prayer. It is prayer stripped of all images and words. Contemplation, as I learned to define it in my spiritual direction education, means "to gaze upon, to behold, with love." The change from discursive prayer (prayer with words) to contemplative prayer can come abruptly or slowly over time. When words fail us we know we are being called into contemplation. This is when we learn to listen. If we have talked throughout our prayers, it may be quite disconcerting to fall into the silence that contemplative prayer offers. We may question whether this is prayer at all. Even though we may

hear nothing but silence, we have to trust that this is from God. German theologian Meister Eckhart wrote, "Silence is the language of God." Trappist monk Thomas Keating adds, "Anything else is a bad translation." Instead of pelting the Holy with our words, we open our hands and our hearts to received. We wait upon God." (96-97)

Poems for Meditation: An Invitation to Prayer will delight the reader, and will seed inner stillness and appreciation throughout the hours of day or evening, for as Roeder writes, "When you enter / that kernel of Silence / there is no longer / a you and I, / just Life / living Itself." (81)

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● Connect on Facebook: *Spiritual Directors International for spiritual care*, <http://on.fb.me/SDIFacebook>

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**Our Sixth Annual Assisi Event:
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Join Jonathan Montaldo, 2015 Emerging Wisdom pilgrimage and contemplative retreat guide, and Marianne Hieb, RSM, and Helen Owens, OSF, Emerging Wisdom workshop presenters, for eight days in Assisi, Italy. We explore together the songs of creation and of friendship through the lens of the spirituality of St. Francis and its confluence with themes from Thomas Merton, in the sacred landscape of their spirit and legacy.

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Core themes will weave through our time together. Elements of our pilgrimage include: the Retreat/Intensive program, a dedicated meeting room, daily retreat prayer, presentations on the day's theme, a late afternoon group gathering, and evening prayer. A half-day visit to sacred Franciscan sites is also included.

Our daily schedule is characterized by spaciousness. Group gatherings will be balanced by time in the late morning and afternoon to wander, exploring the streets and the vistas, the great basilicas and the simple alleyways of Assisi.

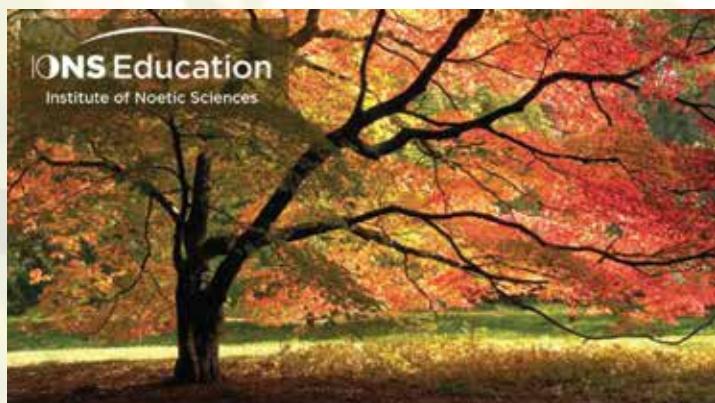
Single occupancy 7 nights full program, half day excursion, 2 meals daily - \$2,690
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Publisher: Spiritual Directors International
Executive Director: Liz Budd Ellmann, MDiv
Editor: Pegge Erkeneff
Production Supervisor: Tobias Becker
Submissions: listen@sdiworld.org
Advertising: www.sdiworld.org

Listen is published four times a year (January, April, July, October). The names **Spiritual Directors International™**, **SDIWorld™**, and **SDI™** and its logo are trademarks of Spiritual Directors International, Inc., all rights reserved. Opinions and programs represented in this publication are of the authors and advertisers and may not represent the opinions of Spiritual Directors International, the Coordinating Council, or the editors.

WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG

Listen is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at www.sdiworld.org, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions,

and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 5,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at www.sdiworld.org.

FIELD NOTES

HOW IS RECEIVING OR OFFERING SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE A GIFT IN YOUR LIFE?

Spiritual Directors International members respond

"I often find I receive more than I give. Either as a spiritual director or spiritual directee, I sometimes am thinking what will we talk about? But the Spirit is always present and moves us in mysterious ways." — Reverend Gwynne Wright

"Probably the most significant way in which receiving and offering spiritual guidance has been a gift in my life is in increased attention to and practice of listening—to others, to God, to myself. The richness of each person's spirit, the depth of each utterance (especially in silence) of God, the touch of each created thing and being is deep and wonderful." — Jonathan MacKenzie

"Spirituality has given me a balance, a calmness. I know that I am paying attention to what really matters."

— Mary R.M. Lewis

"As a spiritual director, I am privy to the secrets of others. I am astounded at the bravery of souls yearning to be whole and have dared to acknowledge that I am one of them. As I witness another's commitment to this soul work, I am continually inspired and renewed in my own spiritual journey. More than this, I am humbled and in awe of the presence of Spirit that stirs in the room each time we meet, whether as guide or guided." — Bonnie Burton Nalley

"I have been receiving spiritual guidance since high school. It has been a valuable means to see myself as I really am and to face, as well as accept myself, as I am. The spiritual director, directee relationship is one of confidence, openness, and truth. For this reason, by saying aloud to my spiritual director what I am feeling and experiencing in everyday life, I often find answers and see things I did not realize were there inside me." — Anne T. Scarlette

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FIELD NOTES, CONTINUED

"The receiving of spiritual guidance has primarily been a gift in my life in moving me beyond the basic functional healing of psychological wounds to spiritual expansion and freedom. I am being blessed in an ongoing way by my spiritual director, which listens not only with her ears but with her heart and spirit. After a few years of being in ongoing spiritual direction, I was inspired and affirmed in the call to accompany others. Thus I have also been able to share the love which I received as I was accompanied. I have found in listening even more grace for the journey in being present to other experiences and expressions of life."

— Angelicia Nizza

"The most striking experience I have had in spiritual direction was my very first spiritual direction hour. In it, my lived experience was invited to intersect with God's response. That personal moment of transcendence has stayed with me, straightened me, strengthened me, and fed me in the most profound ways." — Cathleen Cody Lauer

"It is the best thing that ever happened."

— Mariel McMullen

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"I had spiritual direction from a holy and elderly Jesuit priest during a thirty-day silent retreat. During one session that I will remember for the rest of my life, he uttered a single phrase. That phrase caused many pieces of my life to fall into place in an instant! I realized I was supposed to be there at that time even though getting to the retreat house had been extremely difficult."

— Regina Wieman Voegele, PhD

"The gentle voice of my spiritual director for over twenty years offered me the gift of pilgrimage into the land of don't know, of encouragement to take the path beyond the institution of the church, of cultivating stillness, silent retreats, and the discipline of being the observer, and of listening, responding, journaling, and many literary mentors. Offering spiritual accompaniment to others gifted me with the opportunity to be authentic in what I said I believed, with the privilege of being a friend to another seeker, with the risk of growing, changing, and moving into the mystery of universal love and sacred wisdom of the soul."

— Harlene Walker

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"Is there
anything more delicious
than breathing?"

— Antoinette Voûte Roeder

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ASK OWL

Question: I have met with a spiritual director for several months. This time, preparing for our time together, when I reflected about what I want to talk about during spiritual direction, I realized I am happy, everything in my life is centered, and joyful. I wonder if I really need to meet with a spiritual director. I think I have a bias that I only need a spiritual guide when I am discerning something or struggling to make meaning or significance from daily living.

Hoot Hoot: Thank you! A spiritual director or guide helps us to wake up—whether that is to the present moment of here and now, or to integrating our past and future. A spiritual companion can be present to us in times of discernment, suffering, transformation, *and* delight! What a gift it might be for you and your spiritual director if



you share your experience of being centered and joyful. Perhaps this could give witness, voice, and gratitude to your experience of spiritual growth, and whatever may be emerging within you. Sometimes claiming and being renewed by a joyful state might be missed if not shared and explored for joy's depth of wisdom. Is it possible that greater delight and peace might arise in the world if we

made time to share our times of joy and thanksgiving with one another? An excellent spiritual direction question may be: "When or how do I savor—or refuse—my delight in life, and God's delight in me?"

—If you have a question for Owl, please e-mail Listen@sdiworld.org.

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Spiritual Directors International publications are printed
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APRIL 2015 VOL 9: ISSUE 2

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